

Moreno Valley trustees to vote on proposed school cuts

10:00 PM PST on Wednesday, March 3, 2010

By LAURIE LUCAS
The Press-Enterprise

Critical of staff recommendations, the Moreno Valley school board postponed voting on a list of proposed cuts until next Tuesday's meeting.

"I don't think they're adequately balanced," said trustee Rick Sayre.

To help close a \$14 million to \$16 million deficit projected for next year's budget, the staff suggested getting rid of 111 elementary teachers, four counselors, seven teaching specialists, five high school administrative positions, the adult education principal and three middle school assistant principal positions that now are vacant.

Staff also recommended restoring and funding one high school assistant vice principal position.

What stunned the school board was a turnout of more than 150 people, mostly Hispanic, who pleaded to keep the Moreno Valley Community Adult School at 13350 Indian St.

At least a dozen spoke movingly about how adult education has changed their lives, brought pride to their children, helped them look for jobs, improved their English and made them better U.S. citizens.

"I don't need a translator," Carlos Torres said. "You see my advance in English. Thank you. I'm really sure you will not close the school."

Through an English translator, Barbara Rivera spoke in Spanish of working in the fields and caring for her ill son when she was young.

"I couldn't go to school. Now that I'm older I beg you to help us," she said. "My son is feeling very proud that I'm learning English."

The district is legally required to give written notice of pending layoffs by March 15 to teachers and counselors and by April 29 to the clerks, bus drivers and cafeteria workers.

Other speakers lobbied the board not to slash any more counselors, saying they help keep students in school and steer them into career paths.

Trustee Victoria Baca affirmed her strong support of adult education.

"We have a high dropout rate and a large number of students with learning disabilities," she said.

The board meets at 7 p.m. at 25634 Alessandro Blvd. in Moreno Valley.

Reach Laurie Lucas at 951-368-9569 or llucas@PE.com